

Be Filled With the Spirit



Thrust Statement: Ethical behavior is the means by which one determines if he or she is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Scripture Reading: [Ephesians 5:18](#)

Paul, in the Ephesian Epistle, states emphatically that the saints in Ephesus are to “be filled with the Spirit” ([5:18](#)). What does this mean? Is Paul speaking of the baptism of the Spirit that occurred on the Day of Pentecost ([Acts 2](#))? Is this the “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh ([Joel 2:28-29](#))? Or is this filling associated with ethical conduct? In other words, does this filling have to do with the “fruit of the Spirit” in [Galatians 5:22-26](#)? As one seeks to understand this phrase, one must again look to the context in order to draw conclusions that fit the framework of the text. Christians ought not to assume that this filling is associated with Spirit baptism. Believers frequently have [Acts 2](#) in the back of their minds as they read [Ephesians 5:18](#).

It is not uncommon for Christians to read [5:18](#) with the “outpouring” of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-13](#)). Yet, as one reads [Acts 2](#), one is conscious that the supernatural outpouring of the Spirit on this particular day is no more typical than Paul’s conversion experience on the Damascus road. The “violent wind” and “the tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” ([2:2,3](#)) are no more characteristic of conversion than the “light from heaven” and the “voice” in the conversion of Saul ([9:3-4](#)). One does not have to experience this kind of phenomenon to receive the inward experience of salvation with the gift of the Holy Spirit in a non-miraculous measure. Even when one experiences the special gifts of the Spirit, this does not, in and of itself, elevate the gifted person to a state of greater spirituality.

For instance, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians reveals the rivalries that existed in this congregation in spite of the Spiritual gifts. Paul writes: “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ” ([1 Corinthians 3:1](#)).^[1] This Epistle begins with recognition of spiritual gifts:

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ

Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—⁶ because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed (**1:4-7**).

Even though the Corinthians were showered with spiritual gifts, they lacked being filled with the Spirit. As stated above, Paul writes: “I could not address you as spiritual ($\pi\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\omega\iota$ pneumatikoi), but as “worldly” ($\sigma\omega\psi\kappa\iota\kappa\omega\iota$ sarkinoi). In other words, Paul could not address the Corinthians as spiritual but as carnal. One is immediately aware that the Corinthians were not filled with the Spirit even though they possessed spiritual gifts and were sealed by the Spirit. They were still “mere infants in Christ.” Once more listen to Paul as he drives home his point about their carnality:

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men (**3:1-4**)?

Worldliness still plays a major role in the lives of God’s people. Many Christians are not careful about how they live. The full context for this study (**Ephesians 5:18**) is **4:17—6:9**. Prior to Paul’s two imperatives in **5:18**, he enumerates a long list of negatives that prevents one from being filled with the Spirit. In **5:15**, he exhorts the believers to “Be very careful, then, how you live.” What does this verse mean to you? Does this verse relate to the command to “be filled with the Spirit”? Paul explains his comments by three “not . . . but” contrast in **5:15b** to **5:18**.

5:15	5:17	5:18
Be very careful, then, how you live—not ($\mu\eta\psi$, mh) as unwise but ($\alpha\zeta\lambda\omega\psi$, alla) as wise.	Therefore do <u>not</u> ($\mu\eta\psi$, mh) be foolish, <u>but</u> ($\alpha\zeta\lambda\omega\psi$, alla) understand what the Lord’s will is.	Do <u>not</u> ($\mu\eta\psi$, mh) get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. <u>Instead</u> ($\alpha\zeta\lambda\omega\psi$, alla), be filled with the Spirit.

The NIV hides the Greek structure of this contrast in **5:18** with the word *instead*, which in the Greek text is $\alpha\zeta\lambda\omega\psi$ (alla). These three “not . . . but” contrasts are followed by six commands:

1. Do not get drunk on wine (**5:18a**).
2. Be filled with the Spirit (**5:18b**).
3. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (**5:19a**).
4. Sing (**5:19b**).
5. Make music (**5:19b**).
6. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (**5:21**).

An examination of the Greek text for **5:18-21** reveals that this text is one sentence in the Greek, but in the NIV there are five sentences with six commands. In the Greek text there are two imperatives—“Do not get drunk” and “be filled with the Spirit”—and five participles:

1. Speaking (λαλούντες, lalountes) to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (**5:19**).^[2]
2. Singing (άρνούντες, adontes) **[5:19]**.
3. Making music (αὐλαντες, yallontes) **[5:19]**.
4. Giving thanks (ευχαριστούντες, eucristountes) **[5:20]**
5. Submitting (υποτασσούμενοι, Jupotassomenoi) **[5:21]**.

Even though participles may be interpreted as commands, nevertheless, the context indicates that these five participles illustrate the outcome of being filled with the Spirit in **5:18**. As Christians seek to please God in their daily lives, they must understand what the will of God is. Paul addresses this search for ethical behavior in **5:17** that brings honor to God: “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” After enumerating conduct that fails to glorify God, Paul writes: “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (**5:15-16**). This admonition is similar to Paul’s exhortation in **5:8-10**: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.” Paul is concerned about dangerous and unacceptable behavior, or lifestyle. He provides a contrast between giving the “devil a foothold” and “being filled with the Spirit.”

The statement in **5:15**—“Be very careful (αξκριβώ', akribws, “carefully”), then, how you live”—seems to be motivated from **4:17-19**:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Do you live as unbelievers live? Are you darkened in your understanding of God’s will for your life? Are your daily actions separated from God’s life? Are you a drunkard? Do you go to nightclubs to carouse in drinking bouts that bring dishonor to God? Are you a drug addict? Do you sell illicit drugs? Do you take illicit drugs? Do you indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more? Have you put on the new man—a person created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness? Is your life controlled by bitterness, rage, and anger? Is your life filled with brawling, slander, and every form of malice? Do you forgive others as God forgives you in Christ? Do you live a life of love? Do you participate in obscenity and coarse joking, which is out of place for Christians? Do you approve of the fruitless deeds of darkness? Do you want to be filled with the Spirit? If so, then listen to Paul’s answer to how an individual can be filled with the Holy Spirit:

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (**Romans 13:12-14**).

God wants individuals to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus; He does not want individuals to gratify their sinful nature. God wants individuals to be filled with His Spirit. Drunkenness was rampant in the first century as it is today. Pay attention to Paul yet again as he seeks to call attention to the life that is and the life that is not filled with the Holy Spirit:

For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (**1 Thessalonians 5:7-11**).

As one turns his or her attention another time to **Ephesians 5:18**, one is reminded that the New Testament never commands one to be baptized with the Spirit, but rather, one observes that the command is: “be filled with the Spirit.” “Be filled” ($\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega\sigma\theta\epsilon$ plhrousqe) is present tense, passive voice, and imperative mood. The chief evidence of the Spirit’s indwelling is moral—for example, the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**. This filling in **Ephesians 5:18** is a repeatable activity in the lives of God’s people. This filling can be lost if it is not maintained. If one fails to exemplify godly behavior in his or her life, this breakdown in holy performance grieves the Holy Spirit (**4:30**). In this context (**5:18**), “with the Spirit” ($\epsilon\Sigma v\pi\nu\epsilon\psi\mu\alpha\tau i$ en pneumati) is similar to Paul’s phraseology in **Galatians 5:16, 25** concerning ethical conduct that brings glory to God.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, he exhorts the Galatians to “live by the Spirit” and “you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (**5:16**). But in **5:25**, he rephrases his admonition: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Whether one says, “be filled with the Spirit,” or “live by the Spirit,” or “keep in step with the Spirit,” Paul is referring to ethical conduct that will not grieve the Holy Spirit. To “live by the Spirit” is to bring one’s life into harmony with the teachings of Jesus. One cannot read **Galatians 5:19-26** without an awareness that the “fruit of the Spirit” consists of moral qualities. One who is Spirit filled is under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. “Be filled with the Spirit,” for Paul, is not optional, but mandatory.

The verb plhrousqe (“be filled”) is second person plural. In other words, this command is addressed to the entire Christian community. No one is to get drunk; every believer is to be Spirit-filled. This verb is also passive. Paul is saying, “Let the Spirit fill you.” This passive verb is significant in its implications. One should eradicate from his or her life what grieves the Holy Spirit; one should cast aside ungodly behavior that prevents the Spirit from exercising control over his or her life. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians

helps to clarify this verb in **Ephesians 5:18**. For example, he writes in **Colossians 3:16**: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” From this parallel, one realizes that one must never separate the Spirit and the Word of God. The words of Jesus should dwell abundantly in every believer. Christians should not give the “devil a foothold” (**Ephesians 4:27**).

Another aspect of Greek grammar in this verb (“be filled”) is that it is present tense. In Greek there are two kinds of imperative—an aorist imperative describing a single action and a present imperative describing an action that is continuous. For example, in **John 2: 7**, Jesus says, “Fill the jars with water.” The verb γεμιψάστε (gemisate, “fill”) is aorist, active, and imperative. The imperative is aorist since the jars were to be filled only once. On the other hand, when Paul writes: “Be filled with the Spirit,” he uses a present imperative, which conveys the ideas that the filling is to be continuous. Since the Spirit has sealed Christians (**Ephesians 1:13; 4:30**), then Christians should allow the Spirit to saturate their lives continuously. Paul captures this concept of allowing the Spirit to control their day-to-day behavior in his Epistle to Rome:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.⁶ The mind of sinful man^e is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;⁷ the sinful mind^f is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (**Romans 8:5-11**).

This announcement by Paul is very similar to his admonition that led to him to the command in **Ephesians 5:18**. For a second time, one should reread the verses preceding this verse in order to grasp the point that Paul seeks to convey:

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (**5:15-20**).

Paul, as stated above, uses equivalent expressions to enhance one’s understanding of this concept of “be filled with the Spirit.” For example, Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida write:

In a number of languages it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of “being filled with the Spirit.” Such an expression is so frequent in the Scriptures that it would seem to make sense in any language, but this is simply not true. One can, however, use an equivalent expression such as “be controlled by the Spirit” or “let the Spirit rule you” or “let the Spirit live within you.”^[3]

Paul draws a contrast between a pagan's way of life and a Christians' way of life—in or out of the public assembly. In order for one to bear faithful and effective testimony for Jesus Christ, one must be "filled with the Spirit," that is to say, one's life must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. In other words, one's thoughts and one's life must be taken up with Jesus Christ, to whom the Spirit bears witness. Earlier, Paul elaborated on the negative aspects of ethical conduct that portrayed a life devoid of God's Spirit (4:17—5:18a). Participation in the works of the flesh grieves God's Holy Spirit who dwells in those who have become a part of the elect (4:30). Beginning with 5:18b, Paul issues an order in which he tells the Ephesians to "be filled with the Spirit." After issuing this command, he expresses this filling, as stated above, with five participles: (1) speaking, (2) singing, (3) psalming, (4) giving thanks, and (5) submitting.

Speaking (First Participle)

It is significant that three of the participles have to do with singing (5:19). The first is: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." "Speak" equals "speaking" or "addressing" one another. Christians are not to engage in lewd singing, but in singing that builds one another up in the faith. This singing is not limited to a so-called worship service; it is one's way of life—twenty-four hours a day. Dr. S. D. F. Salmond is correct when he writes:

There is nothing, however, to suggest the thought of actual worship. The sentence specifies one of the ways in which the condition of being "filled with the Spirit" expresses itself. In their intercourse one with another their language would not be that of ordinary convention, far less that of base intoxication, but that of spiritual devotion and thankfulness.^[4]

Singing and Playing (Second and Third Participles)

Whether Christians assemble for corporate worship or not, the teaching is the same. One can only surmise from this context that the meetings of God's people must have been musical occasions for exhorting one another and offering praise to God through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The word *psalms* imply a musical instrument.^[5] The next two participles also develop the kind of music employed among God's people—singing and making music. Once again, Stott's comments are helpful in identification of these two kinds of music: "*Singing and making melody* (perhaps the verbs combine vocal and instrumental music to the *Lord with all your heart* (verse 19))."^[6] In this same vein, Salmond comments:

What the distinctions are, if any, between the three terms has been considerably disputed.^[7] $\alpha\lambda\muo\psi$ (yalmos) is a religious song, especially one sung to a musical accompaniment, and *par excellence* an OT psalm; $\nu\mu\nu\circ$ (Jumnos) is properly speaking a song of praise; $\omega\zeta\delta\eta\psi\psi$ (wdh) is the most general term, applicable to all kinds of songs, secular or sacred, accompanied or unaccompanied.^[7]

Since many Christians object to instrumental music in their so-called worship service, it is necessary to deal with the word *psalms* in seeking to understand what it is that Paul speaks of as a part of being filled with the Spirit. T. K. Abbott is also helpful in understanding the word *psalms*, he writes: " $\alpha\lambda\muo\psi$ (Yalmos) from " $\alpha\psi\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\psi$, (yallein)

primarily the plucking of the strings, is used by classical authors to mean the sound of the harp, and hence any strain of music.”^[8] Why did Paul mention both “singing” and “playing” (“making melody,” KJV) if both are identical? R. C. H. Lenski is quite beneficial in understanding [5:19](#):

“Giving utterance” is general; the next two participles specify: “Singing and playing with your heart to the Lord.” Singing is done by the means of the voice; playing by means of an instrument.⁹ $\alpha\psi\lambda\lambda\omega$ (Yallw) means to let a string twang and thus to play a lyre or a harp, and then to play any instrument as an accompaniment to the voice. Thus the two are here combined: “singing and playing.” “Making melody” (our versions) will do if it is applied to instruments. But the view of some commentators that the dative indicates place: “in your heart,” and that this is silent singing in the heart, is untenable. “Giving utterance” does not refer to audible music, over against which the non-audible “in your heart” is placed. There is no $\kappa\alpha\psi\iota\eta$ (kai) before the second participle. The second and the third participle define the first: *all acts* are audible. “Giving utterance” means: by singing with the voice and by playing on instruments. But this is never to be only mechanical it is to be done “with your heart to the Lord: and not merely with the lips and fingers for men. The dative “for the Lord” is like the reflexive “for yourselves.” We ourselves and the Lord go together; all this music is between him and us. He wants no lip service from us. We must sing and play to him “with our heart,” and he ever looks to the heart.^[9]

Lenski has brought out the Greek text that Christians frequently overlook in their analysis of this passage. Many within the Churches of Christ interpret “making melody in your heart to the Lord” as the heart, that is, the heart is the instrument that is to be played, which excludes musical instruments. This odd approach to [Ephesians 5:19](#) is with strong subjective biases, so it seems to me, against instrumental music. Many within the Stone/Campbell Movement view this text through colored glasses. “Making melody” is simply the same as “making music.” One makes music by playing instruments. Some translations capture the meaning of “making melody” in their versions. For example, *The Net Bible* translates the Greek text as follows: “Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music²⁷ in²⁸ your hearts to the Lord.”^[10]

In is in this vein that *The New American Bible* also translates this Greek word *yallontes* as “playing”: “Addressing one another (in) psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts.”^[11] This translation reveals that to “make music” is the same as “playing.” Another translation that captures the meaning of the Greek word “ $\alpha\psi\lambda\lambda\omega\tau\epsilon$ ” (pallontes) is *The New International Version*: “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.”^[12] Once more, *The Jewish New Testament* also grabs hold of the meaning of the Greek word: “Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to each other; sing to the Lord and make music in your heart to him;”^[13]

In Your Heart

Some religious journals, especially within the Churches of Christ, place emphasis upon “in your heart” as the instrument. The argument generally proceeds upon this line:

“One is to play or strike the cords of the heart.” But is this what Paul is saying? One must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down from the church fathers. The traditions of the church often make it difficult, if not almost impossible, for Christians to go back to the text and read it without spectacles. Another translation should help one to grasp the significance of the phrase “in your heart” as simply meaning “with all your heart.” For example, the *Revised Standard Version* renders this phrase this way: “Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.”^[14] The *Contemporary English Bible* translates this verse: “When you meet together, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as you praise the Lord with all your heart.”^[15] John R. W. Stott, as usual, encapsulates the very essence of the phrase with clarity:

This leads to the second result of the Spirit’s fullness, which is “singing and making melody” to the Lord. The Holy Spirit loves to glorify the Lord Jesus, so manifesting him to his people that they delight to sing his praise. Unmusical people have sometimes taken comfort from this exhortation to sing to the Lord “in your hearts” (AV), as if their jubilation could be entirely inward, intended only “for the ears of the Lord” (J. B. Phillips). But the RSV is probably right to translate the expression “with all your heart.” The heart is not so much the place as the manner in which we are to sing. The apostle exhorts us not to silence, but to heartfelt worship.^[16]

As one seeks to uncover the truths of God’s Word, it is necessary to cite sources to help one in his or her recovery of the intent of the text. The following is another lengthy text, but this citation also helps one to get rid of the mishandling of this text by many sincere Christians. Listen to Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown as they elaborate upon both “αὐλαντέ (yallontes, “playing”) and τῇ καρδιψά (th kardia, “with the heart”):

The Spirit give true eloquence; wine, a spurious eloquence. **Psalms**—generally accompanied by an instrument. **Hymns**—in direct praise to God (cf. Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:26; Jas. 5:13). **Songs**—the general term for lyric pieces; “spiritual” is added to mark their being here restricted to sacred subjects, thought not merely to direct praises of God, but also containing exhortations, prophecies, etc. Contrast the drunken “songs,” Amos 8:10. **Making melody**—Greek, “playing and singing with an instrument.” **In your heart**—not merely with the tongue; but the serious feeling of the heart accompanying the singing of the lips (cf. 1. Cor. 14:15; Ps 47:7).^[17]

As one seeks to unravel the true meaning of “in your heart” (τῇ καρδιψά, th kardia), it would be helpful for one to look at a similar phrase in **Colossians 3:16**:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

“With gratitude in your hearts” (εγν τῇ χαψριτι ἀδοντέ εγν ται’ καρδιψαι εΣμων, en th cariti adontes en tais kardiaiis Jumwn, “with grace singing in your hearts”). As noted, the NIV translates this Greek phrase as “With gratitude in your hearts,” which is

equivalent to Paul's words in **Ephesians 5:19**. Paul, in his writings, frequently varies his expression to express the same idea. For instance, in the **sixth chapter of Ephesians**, he writes concerning slaves' obedience to their masters: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ" (6:5). "With sincerity of heart" is a translation of εξ αΣπλοψτητι τη καρδιψ (en Japlothti ths kardias, "in singleness of the heart"). Again, Paul fluctuates his expression in this same chapter when he addresses the slaves: "Doing the will of God from your heart" (εξ' υχη, ek yuchs, "from [the] soul") [6:6].

Again, Paul modifies his expression in order to capture forcefully the necessity of the heart in one's relationship with his or her master: "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men" (6:7). The phrase "Serve wholeheartedly" is from the Greek μετ= ευγνοιψ (met eunoias, "good will"). Whether one says "in your heart" or "with sincerity of heart" or "from the heart" or "serve wholeheartedly," one is saying the same thing with synonymous expressions. In the **Book of Romans**, Paul comments upon the Romans as having been obedient to the ethical teachings of Jesus as having come "from the Heart" (KJV). Paul writes: "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted (**Romans 6:17**).

The NIV translates the Greek text as "wholeheartedly." The word *wholeheartedly* is from the Greek εξ καρδιψ (εξ kardias, "out of [the] heart"). Peter, too, uses this same Greek phrase εξ καρδιψ (εξ kardias "out of [the] heart") in his admonition that Christians should love one another: " Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart^b (**1 Peter 1:22**). For Paul, "singing and playing" are never mechanical—it is to be done with the heart. In conclusion of this analysis of "in your heart," the following words of Solomon concerning his Father, David, sums up the meaning one should attach to this phrase:

My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁸ But the LORD said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for my Name, you did well to have this in your heart (**1 Kings 8:17-18**).

Giving Thanks (Fourth Participle)

If one sings and plays with gratitude in one's heart to the Lord, this mindset will result in a life that is exuberant in thanksgiving for salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. This fourth participle describes one of the ways that one is filled with the Spirit. It is the Spirit of thankfulness for what God has accomplished for humanity in and through Jesus Christ. Paul writes: "Always giving thanks (ευχαριστουντε, eucaristountes) to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:20). This exhortation must be read within the context of the **Book of Ephesians**. As one reflects upon the doctrine of the Trinity in this short Epistle, one observes that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are working together to bring about salvation. This comprehension of redemption should awaken within everyone a spirit of thanksgiving. In other words, this knowledge of redemption informs and directs one's devotion to the Trinity. Paul's reflection upon redemption resulted in his cry:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love⁵ he^a predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding (**Ephesians 1:3-8**).

In verses three and six, one observes that the word *praise* is employed twice. Knowledge of God's mystery evokes spiritual devotion and thankfulness for salvation by grace in and through Jesus. **Ephesians 5:20** is a part of the **verse 19**: “Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (**5:20**). “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” qualifies the participle “giving thanks.” When one puts into practice the three previous participles, one's life will be a life of “giving thanks” for “everything.” One's life that is filled with thanksgiving will be a life that expresses itself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Earlier, Paul speaks of “thanksgiving” following his renunciation of ethical behavior:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving (**5:1-4**).

Why did Paul throw in the word *thanksgiving* in verse four? Is Paul insisting on the grace of thankfulness for the gift of His love to sinful men and women? Paul reminds his readers of God's gift of love, namely, Jesus Christ. One should not live a life of wickedness, but rather a life of thankfulness for God's Atonement through Jesus Christ. Thankfulness will be expressed individually as well as corporately. A part of this thankfulness issues in prayers of thanks for all saints: “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks (ευχαριστω'ν, eucharistwn) for you, remembering you in my prayers” (**1:15-16**). Does intercession of thankfulness for God's people overflow in your prayers?

Since Paul does not define its content, nevertheless, he demonstrates in the remainder of this Epistle how the giving of thanks relates to what God has accomplished for the Christian community by forgiving their sins, raising them with Christ, making them into a new people, accepting them through faith in Jesus, and giving the Holy Spirit as a seal of one's inheritance. Ernest Best writes: “Not sexual lust and covetousness, but thanksgiving is the fitting response to God's goodness and is basic to Christian existence.”^[18] These unholy vices will not be named among God's people, but, on the other hand, the lives of God's children will abound in being filled with the Spirit (**5:18-20**), which issues in speaking “to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:19-20). One's life should never be devoid of this characteristic.

Submitting (Fifth Participle)

In this participle, Paul continues to explain what it means for one to "be filled with the Spirit." Paul writes: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (5:21). This attribute is not the way of the world. It is the basic nature of individuals to dominate others. Yet, this admonition of submission is the will of God. Just as there is spiritual singing with gratitude in the heart, so there must be joyful harmony within the family of God. It is for this reason that Paul writes earlier: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). Whether one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, president of a university or garbage collector, one can only accomplish unity among God's people by "being submissive" (υΣποτασσοψμενοι, Jupotassomenoi, "being subject") to "one another in the fear of the Lord" (5:21).

It is in this same vein that Paul writes in the Roman Epistle as he defines one's act of spiritual worship—"to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—that is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1). In this discussion of what this "spiritual act of worship" means, he enumerates many qualities that develops this thought, but the one quality that this essay wishes to emphasize is found in **verse 10**: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." Peter, too, cautioned those who were shepherds over God's family (not over in the sense of rulers, but of leaders) to exercise caution in guiding God's people as examples of godly behavior:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.⁵ Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."^a⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time (1 Peter 5:1-7).

This subject of humility permeates the writings of Paul. In his Philippians Epistle, he uses Christ as an example of the kind of meekness that Christians should manifest toward one another. Pay attention to Paul as he drives home this point of surrender:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the

same love, being one in spirit and purpose.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (**Philippians 2:1-4**).

Is there tenderness and compassion in your day-to-day walk with God? Do you consider others better than yourself? Do you just look out for number one, or do you look out for others? Do you look down on others who are not in your social status? Is your life filled with meekness? Is your life overflowing with gentleness? How do you respond to these questions? Paul gives Christ as a pattern that Christians should emulate in their dealings with others. Listen to Paul as he uses the greatest example of humility in the universe:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:⁶ Who, being in very nature^a God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature^b of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross (**2:5-8**)!

Shortly before His death upon the Cross, Jesus had to deal with this subject of submission. Some of the disciples wanted places of preeminence in the kingdom. When the other ten learned of this plot, they were indignant (**Matthew 20:20-24**). It was then that Jesus called them together and said:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (**20:25-28**).

The words that Jesus employs in this pericope (unit) is quite revealing. He refers to the “rulers” (αὐτοκρότε, arcontes) of the Gentiles as leaders who actually “lord it over” (κατακυριεύουσιν, katakurieousin) them and that their high officials “exercise authority over” (κατεξουσιαψύχουσιν, katexousiazousin) them. This Scripture is quite revealing concerning the true nature of behavior in God’s kingdom. Christ did not “come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” God’s leaders are not rulers. They cannot “exercise authority over them” nor can they “lord it over” God’s people. Paul’s example of Christ in **Philippians 2:1-11** and Peter’s admonition in **1 Peter 5:1-7** should humble every believer to serve, not to lord it over others.

Shortly after Jesus’ rebuke of His disciples, He again calls attention to the desire for preeminence among God’s people. Matthew lists these seven woes against the religious leaders as he brings his Book to a close. Take notice once more to Jesus as He focuses in on one of these seven woes against the religious leaders for their hypocrisy:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.³ So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do

not practice what they preach.⁴ They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.⁵ "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries^a wide and the tassels on their garments long;⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;⁷ they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'⁸ "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers."⁹ And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.¹⁰ Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ.^b 11 The greatest among you will be your servant.¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (22:2-12).

CONCLUSION

One's reflection upon Paul's admonition to "be filled with the Spirit" should revolutionize one's ethical conduct to God's glory. One who is filled with the Spirit will not allow alcohol to control his or her life. One who is filled with the Spirit will not participate in lewd songs, but rather will take part in spiritual hymns, psalms, and songs to God's glory. One who is filled with the Spirit will sing and play wholeheartedly to the Lord. One who is filled with the Spirit will become servant to others in God's kingdom. One who is filled with God's Spirit will put on the fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). One who is filled with the Spirit will put off the acts of the sinful nature as described in Galatians 5:19-21. In this section Paul enumerates actions that fail to allow the Spirit to fill one's life:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If one wishes to understand what it really and truly means to be filled with the Spirit, one should begin his or her reading with Ephesians 4:17 and conclude with 6:20 to fully grasp what determines whether one is or is not filled with the Spirit. Are you filled with the Spirit of God? Listen, all over again, to the words of Paul:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (5:18-21).

^[1]All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

^[2]*The NET Bible; Bible. English. NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2003; 2003, CD).

e Or *mind set on the flesh*

f Or *the mind set on the flesh*

^[3]Bratcher, Robert G., and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, Originally published under title: A translator's handbook on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.1983, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators, Eph 5:18 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 135.

^[4] S. D. F. Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* in Robertson Nicoll, Editor, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 3:363.

^[5] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (originally published as *God's New Society*, 1979, Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 205.

^[6] Ibid., 206.

^[7] Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 363.

^[8] T. K. Abbott, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 162.

^[9] R. C. H. Lenski, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Commentary on the New Testament (originally published in 1937; Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 620-621.

²⁷²⁷ **tn** See BDAG 1096 s.v. ψάλλω.

²⁸²⁸ **tn** Or “with.”

^[10]Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible; Bible. English. NET Bible.*, Eph 5:19, Biblical Studies Press, 2003; 2003.

^[11]Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Board of Trustees, Catholic Church. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and United States Catholic Conference. Administrative Board. *The New American Bible : Translated from the Original Languages With Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources and the Revised New Testament*, Eph 5:19, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1996, c1986.

^[12]*The Holy Bible : New International Version*, Eph 5:19. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984.

^[13]Stern, David H. *Jewish New Testament : A Translation of the New Testament That Expresses Its*

Jewishness. 1st ed., Eph 5:19. Jerusalem, Israel; Clarksville, Md., USA: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1989.

[\[14\]](#) *The Revised Standard Version*, Eph 5:19. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971.

[\[15\]](#) *Contemporary English Version*. electronic ed., Eph 5:19.

[\[16\]](#) John R. W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1964), 44.

[\[17\]](#) Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Ephesians* in *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 1295/

b Some early manuscripts *from a pure heart*

a 4,5 Or *sight in love. He*

[\[18\]](#) Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 480.

a Prov. 3:34

a Or *in the form of*

b Or *the form*

a That is, boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on forehead and arm

b Or *Messiah*